

VZCZCXYZ0003
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBU #0389/01 0881853
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (CCY AD767191 MSI6925-695)
P 281853Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0593

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000389

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D COPY CAPTION
G/TIP FOR BARBARA FLECK AND MARK FORSTROM
WHA/PPC FOR SCOTT MILLER
WHA/BSC FOR DRUCKER, FRIEDMAN, SHOWELL

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [PGOV](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: NGO "QUIENES SOMOS?" FIGHTS AGAINST
CHILD TRAFFICKING FOR ILLEGAL ADOPTIONS

11. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Wayne recently met with representatives from the NGO "Quienes Somos?" ("Who are We?"), an organization that promotes legislation against child trafficking for illegal adoptions and lobbies the Argentine government (GOA) to assist in their efforts to uncover their true biological identity. NGO representatives explained that the organization was founded in 2002 by individuals who discovered over time that they were illegally adopted by their parents. Since then, the NGO has helped 80 individuals recover their true identity. Although they have met with the GOA's Human Rights Secretariat to request assistance in obtaining access to civil registries for birth records, they claim that the Secretariat has told them that the Secretariat's focus is only on illegal adoptions that took place during the 1976-83 military regime. In addition to advocating legislation that criminalizes trafficking in children for the purposes of illegal adoption and public access to civil registries, "Quienes Somos?" also lobbies for the simplification of Argentina's adoption laws to help alleviate the problem. The Ambassador told the NGO's representatives that fighting trafficking in persons (TIP) for sexual and labor exploitation, as well as illegal adoptions, is a top Embassy priority. He encouraged them to work with other NGOs who are working on these issues. Pol off has subsequently introduced the organization's leaders to other anti-TIP activists and has helped the organization to schedule a meeting with Post's Information Resources Center to learn more about NGOs working on similar issues in the United States. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On February 13, Ambassador Wayne met with Luis Verdina, President of the NGO "Who are We?" (Quienes Somos?), an organization that promotes legislation against child trafficking for illegal adoptions and fights for the right to identity. Verdina was accompanied by Graciela Palma and Maria Rosa Pallone who are also members of the organization. The Ambassador began the meeting by asking about the organization's mission. Verdina replied that the NGO was founded in 2002 by individuals who discovered over time that they were illegally adopted by their parents. He explained that illegal adoptions did not begin with the 1976-83 military dictatorship, when infants of leftist dissidents in captivity were illegally adopted by military families. The members of "Quienes Somos?" are living proof that trafficking in children for the purposes of illegal adoption has always existed and continues to exist in Argentina, he claimed. Palma added that the organization does not seek to punish their families for adopting them illegally, focusing instead on requesting government assistance at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels in obtaining access to civil registries in order to obtain birth records.

13. (SBU) The Ambassador asked whether the organization has met with the GOA's Secretariat of Human Rights. Verdina indicated that the NGO met with HR Secretary Luis Duhalde, but claimed that Duhalde stated that the GOA focused only on illegal adoptions during the last military regime (1976-83). Verdina stated that the organization is working to press the government to assist them in their efforts to recover their identity and noted that the right to identity is enshrined in Argentina's 1994 constitution. Through the NGO's efforts, 80 individuals have been able to discover their true identity, Verdina stated.

14. (SBU) Verdina indicated that many members, like Pallone, discover that they were illegally adopted when they learn that they have a hereditary medical condition that does not run in their adoptive families. Since members do not know their true families' medical history, this not only prejudices the individual who was illegally adopted, but also the families that they themselves have created, he argued. In addition to advocating legislation that criminalizes trafficking in children for the purposes of illegal adoption and public access to civil registries, "Quienes Somos?" also lobbies for the simplification of Argentina's adoption laws.

Verdina explained that Argentina's adoption laws are so complicated that many couples who wish to adopt children feel compelled to do so illegally.

15. (SBU) Verdina also asserted that the GOA should consider this not only as a matter of human rights but also one of security-- since their members were illegally adopted, they often have multiple identification documents with different names, and false date and place of birth. He estimated that up to 3 million Argentines do not know their true biological identity, quoting a UNICEF study that stated that 35 percent of Argentina's 9 million indigent population were abandoned as children. He asserted that in the province of Santiago del Estero, only 2 out of every 10 children are registered

and that a judge in Rio Negro province has denounced hospitals for not registering births. He also claimed that in the NGO's interviews with residents of Castelar, Buenos Aires province, a now defunct clinic may have trafficked up to 5,000 children for illegal adoptions.

16. (SBU) Verdina stated that individuals in similar situations from other countries in the region and around the world have contacted the organization to learn more about their efforts to uncover identity. The organization hopes to expand its membership base to include individuals in the region and eventually take its cause to the United Nations, he stated. The Ambassador thanked Verdina and his colleagues for briefing him on their organization's activities and encouraged them to work with other NGOs who are working to combat trafficking in persons, noting that this is a top Embassy priority. Poloff subsequently introduced the group to the Maria de los Angeles anti-trafficking foundation run by the 2007 International Woman of Courage award winner Susana Trimarco. Poloff has also since helped the organization to schedule a meeting with Post's Information Resources Center to learn more about NGOs working on similar issues in the United States.

WAYNE